AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the Abstract paragraph appearing at page 24 with the following amended abstract. A clean copy of the amended abstract is included on the following page.

Method and apparatus are disclosed for obtaining improved performance ~~of digital communications channels~~ when using Forward Error Correction (FEC) ~~when operating over~~ with channels experiencing ~~with~~ block fading or burst jamming. ~~A channel of interest typically involves jamming or severe signal attenuation (e.g., fading)~~ over some number of contiguous symbols ~~of the transmission~~. One suitable application is when the channel is periodically obstructed due to the rotation of a propeller blade, resulting in a periodic block fading channel. ~~In the preferred embodiment~~ During operation zero symbols are inserted into the received signal stream, prior to the FEC decoder, at times that are estimated or otherwise determined to correspond to periods of jamming or severe fading. The zero symbols effectively "erase" the severely degraded symbols. ~~It is assumed that the~~ The ~~presence of~~ zero symbols ~~is~~ are less detrimental to the ~~operation of the~~ FEC decoder than the ~~presence of the~~ severely degraded symbols, especially ~~in that~~ when the channel interleaving/de-interleaving operations result in the zero symbols being temporarily distributed over a large block of received symbols.